FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA

Item 13

FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA RESEARCH AGENDA

Purpose:
- To further the goals of First 5 California, support policy development and advocacy, facilitate program planning, improve services to children and families, and support the development of new services.

Role of the State Commission:
- To be a funder of applied and/or scientific research on issues/policies that support the Commission's school readiness goals.

Types of Research:
- The table below identifies some of the differences between basic, applied, and evaluation research.

Defining Elements	*Basic (Scientific)*	*Applied*	*Evaluation*
The nature of the problem.	Basic scientific investigation seeks new knowledge about social phenomena, hoping to establish general principles and theories with which to explain them.	Applied Research seeks to understand how basic research can help alleviate a demanding social problem and provides policymakers with well-grounded guides to remedial action	Evaluative research assesses outcomes of treatments applied to social problems or the outcomes of prevailing practices
The goal of the research	To produce new knowledge including the discovery of the nature of relationships between variables	To explore the value of basic knowledge in an applied setting that can be useful to a policymaker who seeks to eliminate or alleviate a social problem	To provide an accurate accounting of a treatment program applied to a social problem
The underlying theory	Selection of a theory to guide hypothesis testing	Selection of a theory, guide-lines, or intuitive hunches to explore the dynamics of a social system	Selection of a theory to fit the problem under assessment
The appropriate techniques	Theory formulation, hypothesis testing using experimental and quasi-experimental methods, sampling, data collec-tion techniques, statistical treatment of data, and validation or rejection of hypotheses	Very similar to basic research, only in settings where the implications of the research is immediately obvious	Use of conventional techniques appropriate to the question

Criteria for First 5 research topics, questions, and/or projects:
- Supports and furthers the vision, goals, objectives and Strategic Plan of First 5 California
- Fills a gap where little or no current research exists or where new /additional research is needed
- Informs the Commission policy agenda
- Does not duplicate efforts undertaken in Statewide Evaluation—special studies
- Does not duplicate evaluation/research efforts underway in our funded projects or by county commissions.

Process for refining research topics/ question/projects:
- A working group, consisting of a combination of the research agenda sub-committee, county representatives and identified experts in the appropriate fields will be used to help further define the problem/issue, describe the conceptual framework, and identify specific research questions.
- The Research Agenda Subcommittee recommends that the work group initially focus efforts in the areas of children with special needs and universal preschool.
- The subcommittee along with the working group will refine the focus areas and make recommendations to the Commission at the May, 2004 meeting.
- State Commission will discuss and set priorities based on the recommendations of research topics, questions, and conceptual frameworks.
- The Commission will approve the release of first-round RFPs.
- Second-round recommendations will follow the same process and be presented to the Commission in July 2004.

Solicitation and selection of research projects:
- Requests for proposals addressing research priorities would be developed and released on a staggered schedule based on staff resources.
- County representatives and First 5 staff will review and evaluate proposals.
- Contracts will be awarded based on final scores.

Amount to be Invested:
- $5 million over 4 years (Strategic Plan).
- Leverage money with joint projects (i.e. Foundations)

Implementation:
- Contingent on additional staff resources
- Time line:
  - Jan- Feb 2004   Working group Meetings
  - March 2004   Work group finalizes research topics
  - May 2004   Topics presented to Commission/approved to release RFP's